

HIGHWAY 17 ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Enhancing Access and Travel



A scenic landscape photograph showing a misty valley with evergreen trees. The sky is a soft mix of blue and white, suggesting early morning or late afternoon. The trees are dark green, and the mist is a light, hazy white. The overall mood is peaceful and serene.

Highway or Local Road?

Highway 17 is the main link between Santa Cruz County and Silicon Valley. It functions like an urban freeway with high numbers of fast moving vehicles, but it's located in a predominantly rural area. It's also a local road for the thousands of people who live along it and rely on their access to neighborhoods, local streets, and individual driveways.

Those two simultaneous uses—regional highway and local road—can cause traffic challenges, especially at access areas where cars and trucks enter and exit the roadway. Each access area has multiple points—transportation engineers call them conflict points—where vehicles slow to exit, accelerate from a stop to enter, or make left turns. Those actions can cause unexpected changes in traffic flow, and all too frequent bumper-to-bumper traffic, especially during rush hour.

A COMMUNITY-BASED PLAN

Many highway improvements have already been made on Highway 17. That's why Caltrans developed a long-term Access Management Plan for the 7.1 mile section between Granite Creek Road and Summit Road. These solutions will fundamentally change how people get on and off the highway.

The Plan recommendations will help manage the corridor as a whole, rather than considering each access point separately. It establishes a framework for reducing conflict points by controlling the location, spacing and design of driveways, roads, medians, and interchanges. The goals are to maintain safety, reduce traffic congestion, and improve access for residents.

This conceptual Plan is based on input from the local community, and through a partnership of Caltrans, the California Highway Patrol, Scotts Valley, Santa Cruz County, the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission, and many other community partners. Over 150 community members attended six workshops, and over 100 more left comments on the interactive online map and via email.

 **7.1**
MILES

 **60,000**
CARS PER DAY

 **59**
ACCESS POINTS

 **240**
CONFLICT POINTS

 **70%**
OF ACCESS-RELATED COLLISIONS INVOLVE LEFT TURNS
(national statistic for all roads)

REDUCING VEHICLE CONFLICT POINTS

An effective access management program that reduces vehicle conflict points allows vehicles to move more efficiently and reliably. By maximizing the existing roadway capacity, access management techniques help reduce travel time and delay. This will also reduce fuel consumption and improve air quality. Here are some of the access management techniques the Plan proposes for this section of the highway.



Median Barriers

The Plan recommends a continuous, solid median barrier to separate opposing lanes of traffic, and eliminate left turns across the mainline.



Grade Separations

To maintain access at interchanges with median barriers, grade separations will link to frontage streets to carry traffic over or under the highway rather than across.



Frontage Streets

Street networks along a major highway create integrated connectivity within an area and offer residents a way to travel locally, as well as to safely and conveniently access the highway system.



Auxiliary Lanes

Deceleration lanes let cars slow down alongside the faster moving traffic before exiting, and acceleration lanes give vehicles a chance to speed up before merging onto the highway.



Driveway Location Improvements

There are a variety of techniques to reduce the friction caused by numerous proximate access points, including consolidating entry points for neighboring properties, relocating some driveways to local roads, and eliminating some duplicate driveways.



Driveway Design Improvements

Increasing the turning radius and widths and decreasing slopes for some driveways will make it easier to enter and exit, minimizing the difference in speeds between turning vehicles, and through traffic.

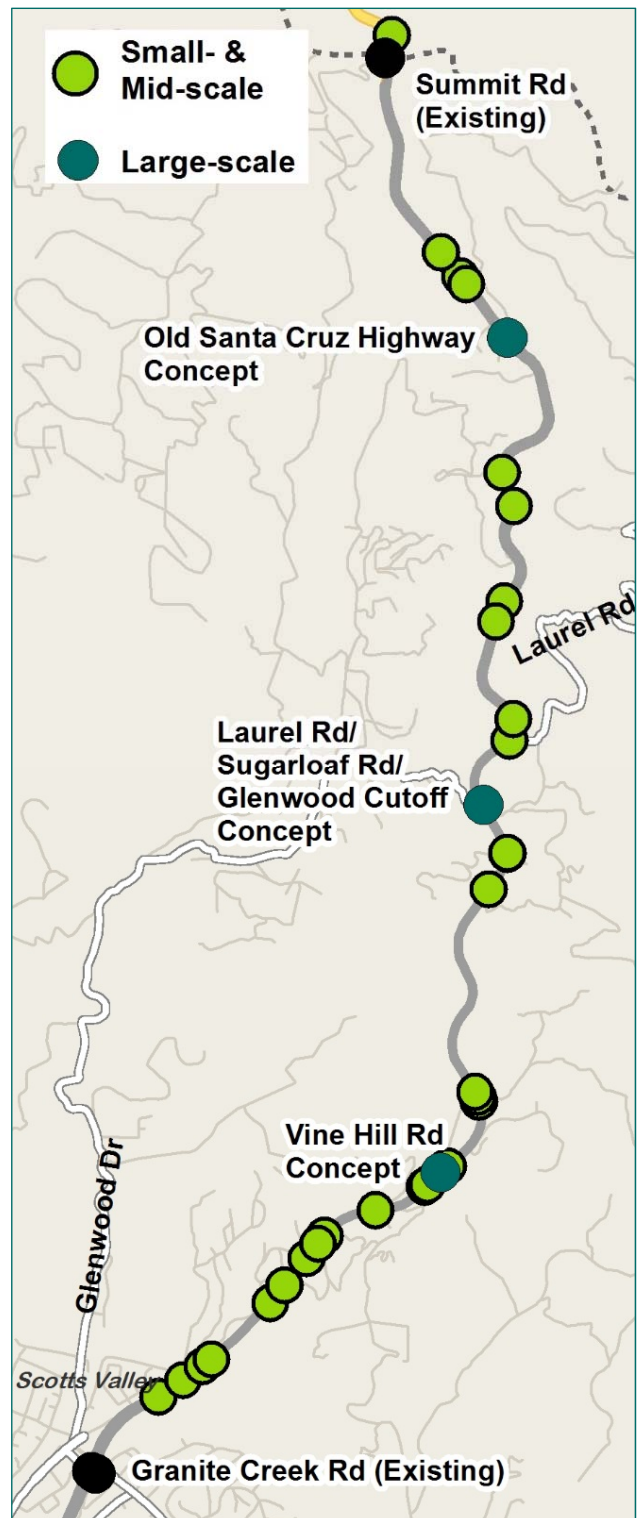
Each concept offers a benefit to a specific location; the total package of concepts will work together to provide corridor-wide benefits.

Improvement Concepts

The Plan includes recommendations for improvements through 32 concepts, including small-scale driveway improvements, medium-scale driveway consolidations, and relocations and the three large-scale interchange projects highlighted in the following pages. The projects strategically balance local access and highway mobility; each is designed for long-range compatibility with the other concepts. None will impede access, although some traffic may need to travel slightly farther on frontage streets. The projects also align with Land Trust of Santa Cruz County efforts to install a wildlife habitat connectivity crossing.

Each conceptual project will individually need further design and engineering, environmental studies, and public review. Prioritizing and implementing the projects will depend on available funding and balancing costs and benefits. Caltrans and its partners will be working to leverage potential funding, including local, regional, state and federal sources.

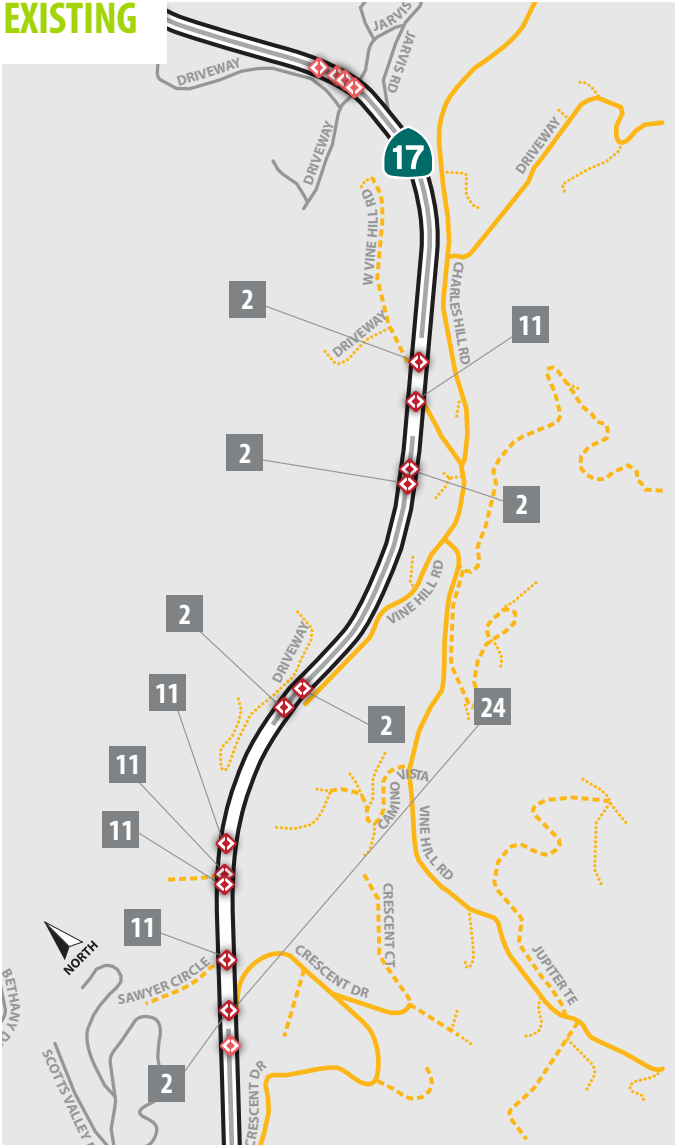
You'll find a full set of concepts for the study area at ca-hwy17amp.org.



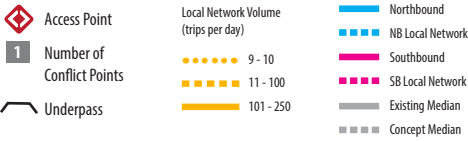
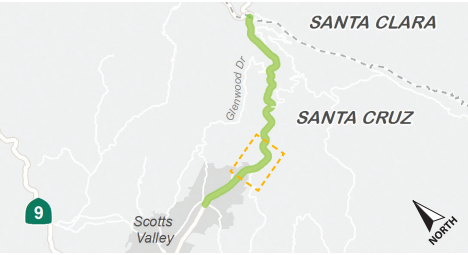
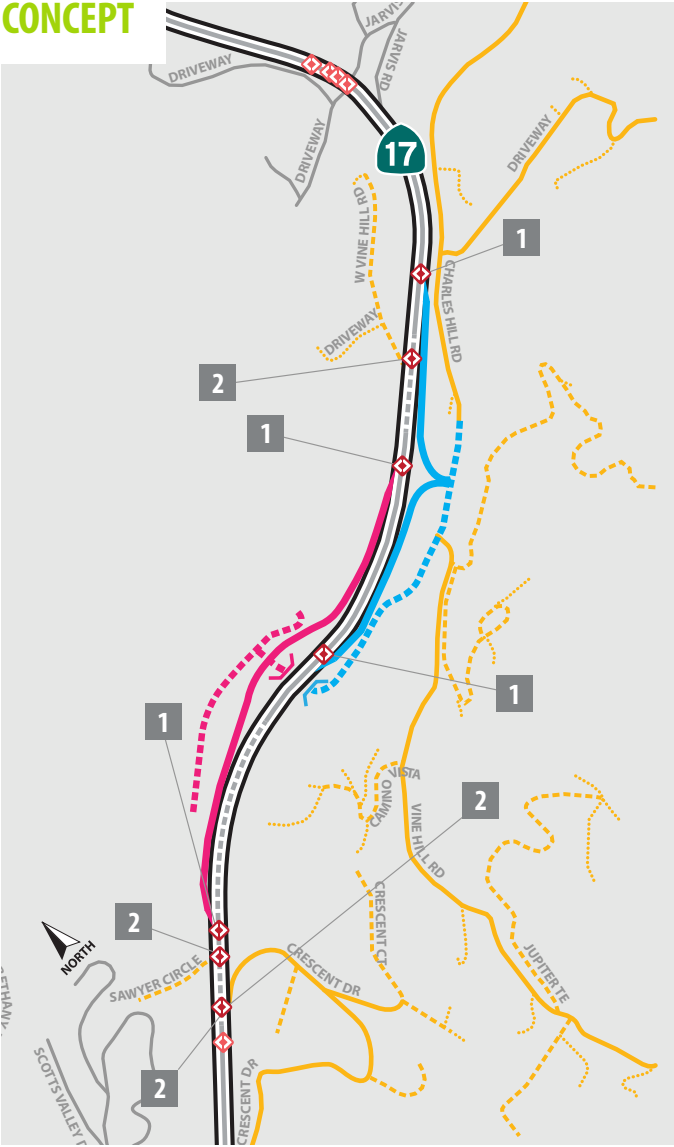
The plan focuses on 7.1 miles from Granite Creek Road in Scott Valley to Summit Road.

Vine Hill Road

EXISTING



CONCEPT

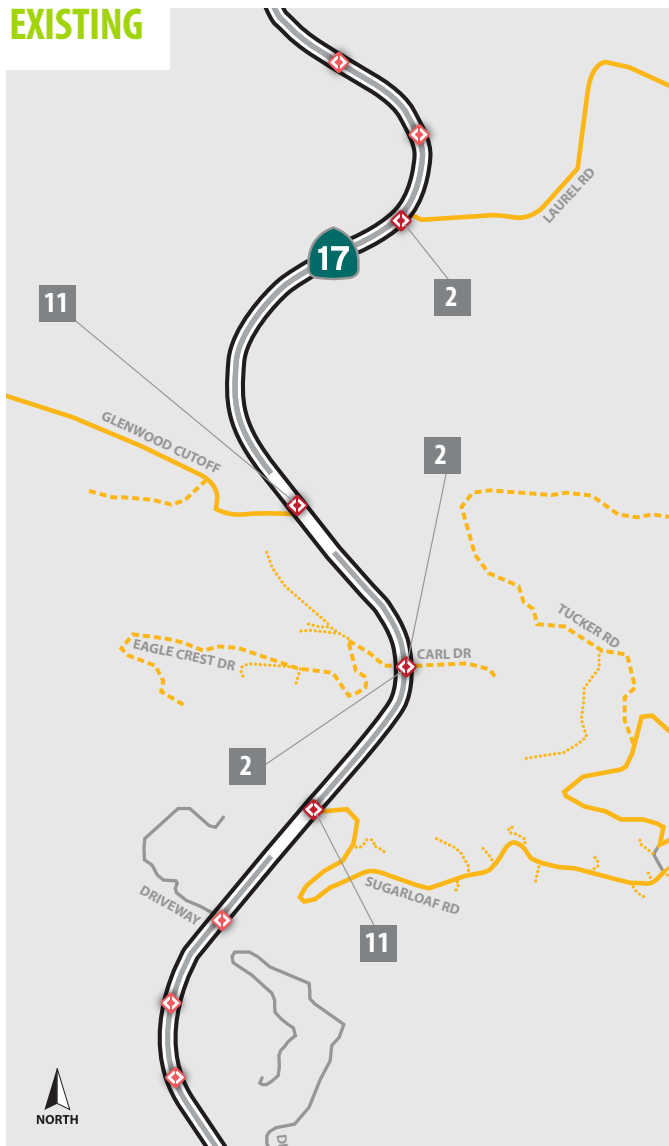


Vehicles now may make left hand turns onto and from Vine Hill Road. The conceptual interchange would extend the median barrier from Crescent Drive to north of Vine Hill, add ramps and a frontage network that will carry local traffic under the highway.

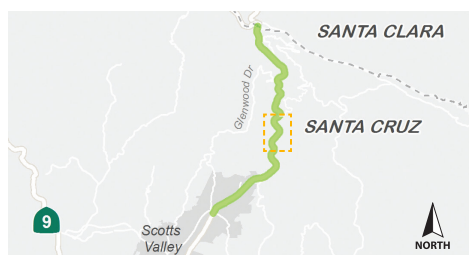
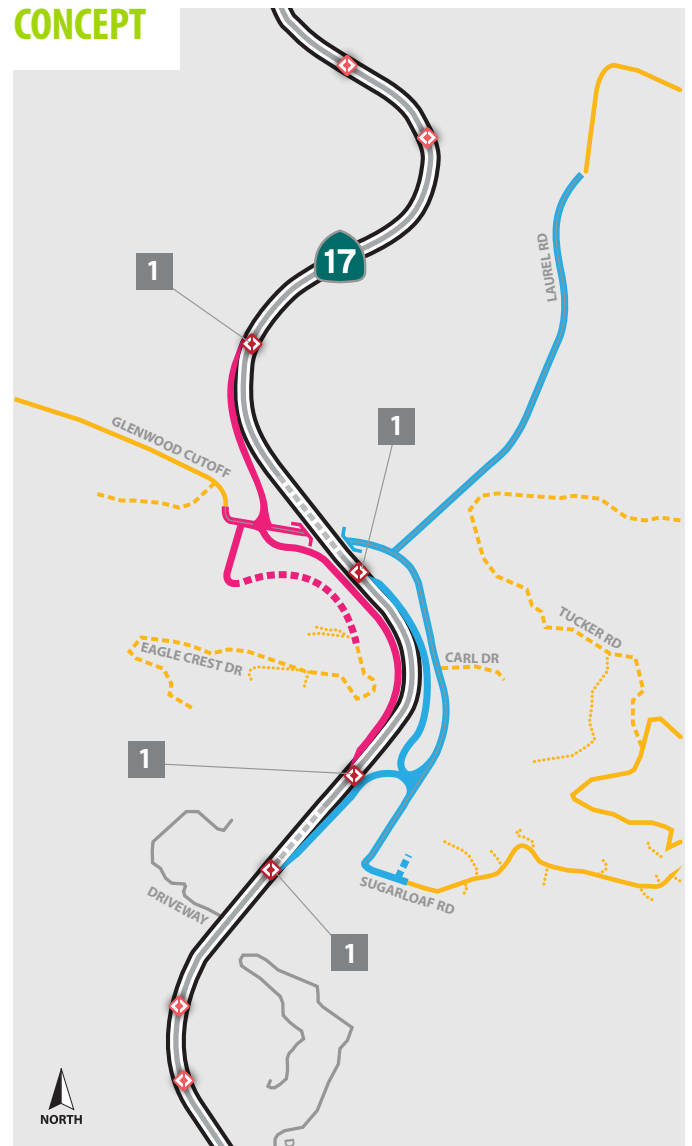
Reduces conflict points from **91** → **12**

Sugarloaf Road/Laurel Road/Glenwood Cutoff

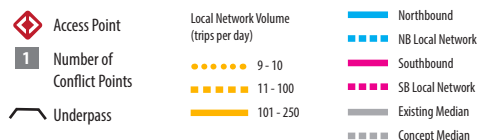
EXISTING



CONCEPT



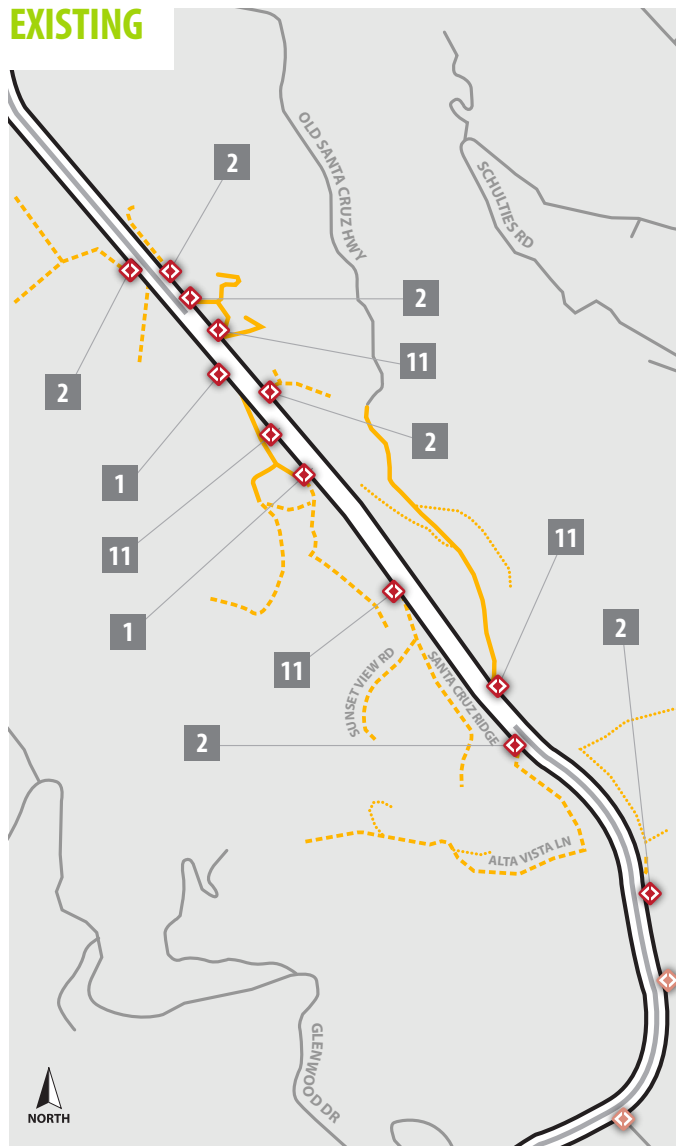
The conceptual interchange would provide off and on ramps for each direction and provides southbound access with a new frontage road network and an underpass beneath the highway.



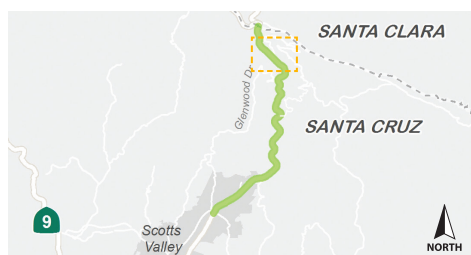
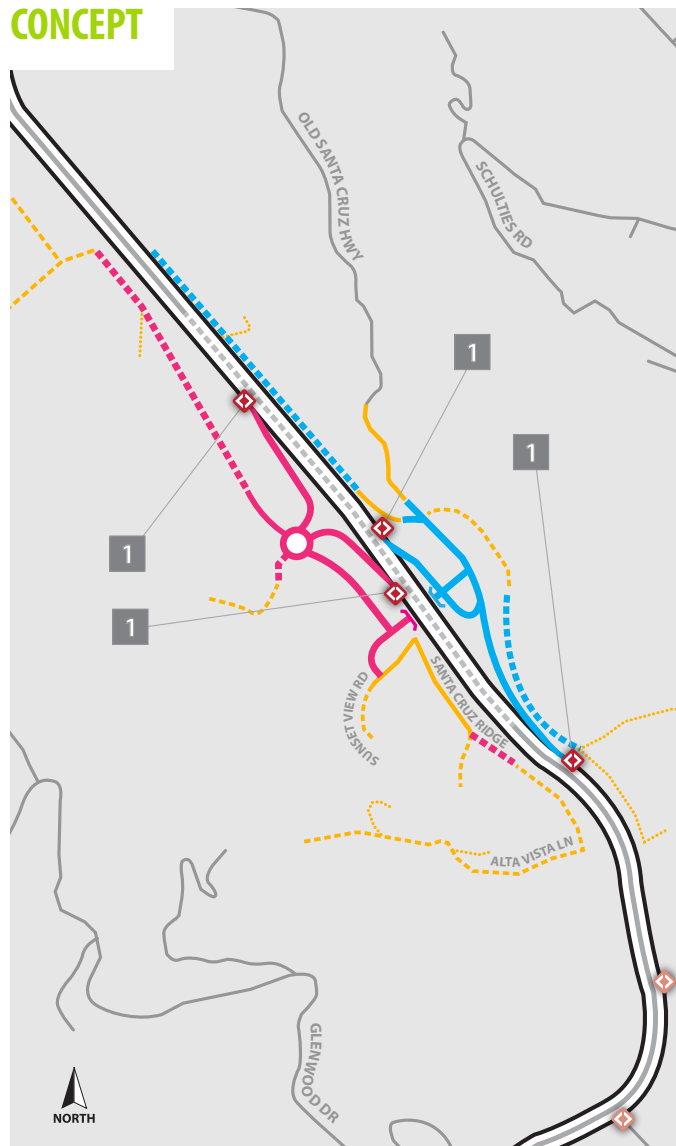
Reduces conflict points from **28 → 4**

Old Santa Cruz Highway

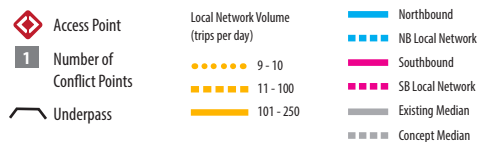
EXISTING



CONCEPT



There are residential and business driveways along both sides of the highway here, with vehicles making left turns at various points. The conceptual interchange would create smoother right-side entries and exits to the highway, connect the existing median barrier to eliminate left turns, and add an underpass beneath the highway to link with an improved frontage network.



Reduces conflict points from **58 → 4**

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Reliable, Convenient Highway Access

The Highway 17 Access Management Plan would maintain safety, reduce traffic congestion and improve access for residents. In addition to the proposed concepts, Caltrans will continue to fulfill its responsibility as owner and operator of the highway system, including maintenance and safety improvements as necessary. The process of improving highway systems is very thorough, comprehensive, and can take many years. Implementing the concepts in this Plan will require local sponsors and collaboration between Caltrans and its partners to obtain funding.

What's Next

